




**STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES
ANDREW JACKSON BUILDING
800 DEADERICK STREET, 15TH FLOOR
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 09, 2007

TO: Residential Services Providers
Independent Support Coordination Agencies

FROM: Stephen H. Norris, Deputy Commissioner 

SUBJECT: Shared Living Conversions

During the course of the last several months, the Division of Mental Retardation Services has been engaged in a focused effort to analyze the issues surrounding single person placements. Excluding individuals receiving Companion Model Residential Supports, there are currently well over 600 people statewide residing in single person settings funded through the main Medicaid Waiver. Nearly 18 million dollars in total savings could be realized if individuals living alone had a roommate.

We realize this is a complex issue and acknowledge that it makes sense for some people to live alone. Some people need to live alone to ensure their health and safety and/or the safety of others. Some people own their own homes and some people are receiving cost effective companion model supports. However, we also recognize that a considerable number of people currently residing in single person settings could not only be successfully supported in a shared living arrangement, but by doing so could reap the benefit of companionship and decreased expenses by sharing a home and a life with another person with a disability. These are the individuals we are proceeding with our focused effort to convert their single person residential setting to a shared living arrangement. This will help the Division control costs, better spend our limited resources and thus serve more people.

We recognize that tackling system wide issues that affect the lives of people supported, their families and the provider network can most effectively be addressed if broken down into small steps. Our approach is two fold; we will continue to consider the long term vision (cost savings, addressing the needs of the greatest number of people possible) while having a targeted focus, working with one person/family at a time, using person centered approaches.

The Regional Office Transition Teams are working closely with Residential Providers and Independent Support Coordinators to help with converting single person residential settings to shared living arrangements. It is expected that person centered practices will be implemented and efforts made to help match people with suitable roommates, paying attention to such things as proximity to family and work, community connections, common interests and preferences, etc. Residential Providers are encouraged to look within their own Service Recipient base for people who might be interested in combining households. The Regional Office Transition Staff can assist with linking people looking for housemates and it is suggested that Providers take advantage of the Housemate Bulletin to help people find compatible housemates. Finally, it is expected that existing living arrangements be considered for new service recipients entering community residential services.

As barriers are encountered, the Division of Mental Retardation will do all that it can to assist with strategies for resolution. Using a person centered approach, while being attentive to issues of health and safety; we have confidence that we can meet the needs of the greatest number of people possible. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in this endeavor.

SHN:dch

cc: Larry Latham, Ph.D.

Joanna Damons

Central Office Directors

Regional Directors